

# Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg

## The Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra

The Philharmonic State Orchestra is Hamburg's largest and oldest orchestra, looking back on many years of musical history. When the "Philharmonic Orchestra" and the "Orchestra of the Hamburg Municipal Theatre" merged in 1934, two tradition-steeped orchestras combined. Philharmonic concerts have been performed in Hamburg since 1828, artists such as Clara Schumann, Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms being regular guests of the Philharmonic Society. The history of the opera company goes back even further: Hamburg has been home to musical theatre since 1678, even if a regular opera or theatre orchestra was only formed later. To this day, the Philharmonic State Orchestra has embodied the sound of the Hansa City, a concert and opera orchestra in one.

During its long history, the orchestra encountered great artist personalities. Apart from composers of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as Georg Philipp Telemann, Piotr I. Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Sergey Prokofiev and Igor Stravinsky, since the 20<sup>th</sup> century chief conductors such as Karl Muck, Eugen Jochum, Joseph Keilberth, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Horst Stein, Gerd Albrecht, Ingo Metzmacher and Simone Young have shaped the orchestra's sound. Renowned conductors of the pre-war era such as Otto Klemperer, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Karl Böhm and Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt gave brilliant performances, as did outstanding conductors of our times: suffice it to mention Sir Neville Marriner, Christian Thielemann, Semyon Bychkov, Kirill Petrenko, Valery Gergiev and Sir Roger Norrington.

Starting with the 2015/2016 season, Kent Nagano has taken on the position of Hamburg's General Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Philharmonic State Orchestra and the Hamburg State Opera. In his first season Kent Nagano initiated a new project, the Philharmonic Academy at St. Michaelis, focusing on experimentation and chamber music. In 2016 Nagano and the Philharmonic undertook a successful three-week concert tour in South America. Since 2017 Kent Nagano and the Philharmonic State Orchestra have continued the traditional Philharmonic Concerts at the new Elbphilharmonie, for which they commissioned Jörg Widmann to compose the oratorio *ARCHE*, which was given its world premiere during the hall's opening festivities.

The Philharmonic State Orchestra offers approximately 35 concerts per season and performs more than 240 performances per year at the Hamburg State Opera and the Hamburg Ballet – John Neumeier, making it Hamburg's busiest orchestra. The stylistic bandwidth covered by the 134 musicians, ranging from historically informed performance practice to contemporary works and including concert, opera and ballet repertoire, is unique throughout Germany. Chamber Music has a long tradition at the Philharmonic State Orchestra: what began in 1929 with a concert series for chamber orchestra has been continued since 1968 by a series of chamber music only, which celebrates its 50-year anniversary in 2018.

In 2008 Simone Young and the Philharmonic State Orchestra won the Brahms Award of the Schleswig-Holstein Brahms Society. In 2012 Simone Young received a Helpmann Award for performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and Wagner's *Rheingold* with the Philharmonic in Brisbane, Australia. The orchestra has recorded the complete *Ring* by Wagner as well as the complete symphonies of Johannes Brahms and Anton Bruckner – the latter in the rarely-performed original versions – as well as works by Mahler, Hindemith and Berg, and has released DVDs of opera and ballet productions by Hosokawa, Offenbach, Reimann, Auerbach, J.S. Bach, Puccini, Poulenc and Weber.

The members of the Philharmonic State Orchestra feel equally beholden to the Hansa City's musical tradition and responsible for the city's artistic future. Since 1978 the musicians have been

participating in education programmes in Hamburg's schools. To this day, the TV format *Musikkontakte* initiated by Gerd Albrecht during his tenure as General Music Director is unforgotten. Today, the orchestra maintains a broad education programme, including school and kindergarten visits, patronage for music projects, introductory events for children and family concerts. The orchestra's own academy prepares young musicians for their professional careers. The Philharmonic's musicians thereby make an equally enjoyable and valuable contribution to tomorrow's music education in the music metropolis of Hamburg.